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Groups of countries in special situations: follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries

Letter dated 22 September 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

In my capacity as Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, I have the honour to transmit to you the ministerial communiqué adopted by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of landlocked developing countries at their fifteenth annual meeting, held on 22 September 2016, under the proposed theme for the upcoming meeting, "Harnessing coherence in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Vienna Programme of Action" (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 22 (b).

(*Signed*) Mwaba Patricia **Kasese-Bota**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries

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Annex to the letter dated 22 September 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Zambia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Ministerial communiqué

Fifteenth annual ministerial meeting of the landlocked developing countries

New York, 22 September 2016

We, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of landlocked developing countries, having met at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, on 22 September 2016, on the occasion of the seventy-first session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, and having held our deliberations under the theme, "Harnessing coherence in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Vienna Programme of Action",

Recognizing that the lack of territorial access to the sea, aggravated by remoteness from world markets and high transit costs and risks, imposes serious constraints on export earnings, private capital inflow and domestic resource mobilization of landlocked developing countries and therefore adversely affects their overall sustainable development,

Recalling the Almaty Declaration and the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries, adopted in August 2003,

Recalling the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024, contained in General Assembly resolution 69/137, adopted in November 2014, which provides a comprehensive plan of action for the next decade to address the special challenges and needs of landlocked developing countries,

Recalling the Livingstone Call for Action for the Accelerated Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries, adopted at the high-level follow-up meeting to the second United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, held in Livingstone, Zambia, in June 2015, which highlights key measures and initiatives required to accelerate implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action,

Recalling also General Assembly resolutions 69/232 of December 2014, and 70/217 of December 2015 related to the particular needs and challenges of landlocked developing countries to be addressed by the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action,

Recalling the outcome document of the United Nations summit for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda, entitled "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" (General Assembly resolution 70/1),

Recalling also General Assembly 69/313, entitled "The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda), which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,

Recalling further the Paris Agreement, adopted at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,

Recalling the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, adopted at the third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction,

Recalling also the declaration adopted by the High-level Forum of Heads of State and Government of the 32 landlocked developing countries, held in New York on 28 September 2015 under the theme, "Linking landlocked developing countries to global opportunities",

Recalling further the Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, held at the margins of the tenth Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization in Nairobi on 16 December 2015,

Welcoming the declaration adopted at the fifth Meeting of the Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries Responsible for Trade, held in Geneva in June 2016 under the theme "Harnessing the trade potential of the landlocked developing countries to accelerate the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development",

Recalling the outcome documents of the fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, held in Nairobi from 17 to 22 July 2016, and the ministerial communiqué of the landlocked developing countries, adopted on 16 July 2016, prior to that session,

Recalling also the call for action adopted at the high-level symposium on the theme "Sustainable Development Goal 6 and targets: ensuring that no one is left behind in access to water and sanitation", held in Dushanbe from 9 to 11 August 2016,

Welcoming also the ministerial declaration of the 2016 high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, on the theme "Ensuring that no one is left behind",

Recalling resolutions 700 (XXXVI) and 711 (XXXVI) adopted at the thirty-sixth session of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean; resolution 71/3 adopted at the seventy-first session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and resolution 934 (XLVIII) adopted at the eighth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Specialized Technical Committee on Finance, Monetary Affairs, Economic Planning and Integration and the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024,

Recalling also agreed conclusions 524 (LXII) adopted by the sixty-second session of the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on

Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which invites UNCTAD to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 into its work programme,

Have adopted the following ministerial communiqué:

1. *We take note* of the report of the Secretary-General presented to the General Assembly on implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014-2024 (A/71/313);

2. *We reaffirm* the ambitious and transformational vision set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We stress that the 2030 Agenda is people-centred, universal and transformative and that its Goals and targets are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development — economic, social and environmental. It is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity that also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom, to be implemented by all countries and stakeholders acting in collaborative partnership. We reaffirm all the principles recognized in the Agenda, and that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, and pledge to ensure that no one is left behind;

3. *We stress* that the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the revitalized global partnerships should take into account the vulnerabilities and special needs and challenges facing landlocked developing countries. We believe that ending poverty in all its forms, combating inequalities and achieving sustainable and inclusive economic growth and shared prosperity are fundamental goals for humanity;

4. *We recognize* that the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, provides an enhanced and revitalized global framework for financing sustainable development and reaffirm the need to address the special challenges and needs of landlocked developing countries in structurally transforming their economies, harnessing benefits from international trade and developing efficient transport and transit systems;

5. *We reaffirm* our collective commitment to mainstream the Vienna Programme of Action into regional, national and sectoral development strategies and in this regard we call upon our development partners, including international and regional organizations, to provide technical support for our mainstreaming efforts, including towards the holding of national workshops;

6. *We also reaffirm* our commitment to the full and timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and our support for mainstreaming it into our national development policies and programmes;

7. *We welcome* the fact that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognize the special needs of the landlocked developing countries and emphasize the importance of fostering strong synergy and coherence in their implementation and that of the Vienna Programme of Action and encourage coordination and coherence in the follow-up of their implementation;

8. *We reaffirm* that the high-level political forum has a central role in providing political leadership, guidance and recommendations for the implementation of sustainable development commitments. The forum is now called to oversee a network of follow-up and review processes for the 2030 Agenda at the global level, working coherently with the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and other relevant organs and forums, in line with existing mandates. We stress that the forum continues to focus on addressing the challenges of the most vulnerable countries, including the landlocked developing countries;

9. *We stress* that the availability and use of accessible, timely, reliable and high-quality disaggregated data underpins our efforts to leave no one behind by, inter alia, identifying inequalities. Data should measure poverty in all its forms and dimensions as well as progress on sustainable development, to reveal inequalities, gaps, progress and recurrent challenges, identify innovative solutions and inform all policies necessary in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at all levels. Given the constraints and challenges for landlocked developing countries in this regard, we call upon the development partners and international organizations to assist landlocked developing countries in building and strengthening their official national capacities for data collection, disaggregation, dissemination and analysis;

10. *We underline* that the development and maintenance of transit transport and information and communications technology infrastructure are crucial for landlocked developing countries in order to reduce high trading costs, to improve their competitiveness and for them to become fully integrated into the global market;

11. We emphasize that a strong energy infrastructure and improved access to clean and renewable energy in landlocked developing countries is needed to advance the development of domestic productive capacity and to better connect to the regional and international markets. We call upon the international community to enhance its support for the creation of such infrastructure in our countries. In this context, we also re-emphasize that resources should be mobilized for the production, distribution and marketing of clean energy;

12. *We stress* that the magnitude of the resources required to invest in infrastructure development and maintenance remains a major challenge and requires the forging of international, regional, subregional and bilateral cooperation on infrastructure projects, the construction of quality infrastructures and maintenance of all transport and other transborder and regional infrastructures, more allocation from national budgets, the effective deployment of international development assistance and multilateral financing in the development and maintenance of infrastructure and the strengthening of the role of an accountable private sector and public-private partnerships, as well as other innovative means of finance;

13. *We call upon* the landlocked developing countries to develop and embed infrastructure investment development plans in their national development strategies and strengthen the domestic enabling environment, and urge the international community to provide financial and technical support for landlocked developing countries to translate these plans into concrete implementable projects;

14. *We invite* multilateral financial and development institutions and regional development banks to establish dedicated infrastructure funding for the landlocked

developing countries and provide them with a special window for allocation of resources for infrastructure development and maintenance and to undertake analytical work and provide support towards better project preparation;

15. *We welcome* the launch of the Global Infrastructure Forum, led by the multilateral development banks, on 16 April 2016 in Washington, D.C. We stress that the Forum should address the infrastructure needs of the landlocked developing countries in a focused manner;

16. *We stress* that cooperation on fundamental transit policies, laws and regulations between landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours is crucial for the effective and integrated solution of cross-border trade and transit transport problems and in this regard encourage landlocked developing countries and transit countries to join and implement the international conventions on transport and transit and bilateral, subregional and regional agreements, where applicable abiding by customary international norms on transport and transit to and from landlocked developing countries;

17. *We call upon* the international organizations to build the capacity of landlocked developing countries and transit countries to understand the benefits and implications of accession to the international conventions and other legal instruments related to transit transport and trade facilitation through training, in-depth studies on the costs and benefits of joining the conventions and guidelines for the implementation thereof;

18. *We stress* that it is extremely important within the framework of the World Trade Organization that special attention be given to the concerns and needs of landlocked developing countries, in order to increase their participation in the Multilateral Trading System. In this regard, we support the call made by the fifth Meeting of the Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries Responsible for Trade for the establishment of a specific work programme for landlocked developing countries by the eleventh Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization. The work programme will address the specific concerns and needs of landlocked developing countries in order to increase their participation in the multilateral trading system, in the key areas of trade facilitation, aid for trade, services and accession;

19. *We call upon* the members of the World Trade Organization to strengthen its negotiation function and to reinvigorate work towards a successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round, with meaningful, ambitious and development-centred outcomes for the landlocked developing countries;

20. *We call upon* the member States of the World Trade Organization for a rapid ratification and implementation of the Agreement on Trade Facilitation. We urge members to continue to provide and enhance technical, financial and capacity-building assistance to landlocked developing countries, on a sustainable basis, for the effective implementation of the Agreement;

21. *We call upon* international organizations to establish special facilities and dedicated programmes for the landlocked developing countries, such as the Trade Facilitation Agreement Facility of the World Trade Organization, to assist landlocked developing countries with the execution and scaling-up of trade

facilitation initiatives and effective implementation of the Agreement and of important international conventions and regional agreements;

22. *We call upon* the international community to assist in undertaking research and analysis on the impact of landlockedness on sustainable development and the effective participation of landlocked developing countries in international trade, and to develop policy recommendations that can help our countries to make progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals;

23. *We are committed* to promoting structural economic transformation in order to reduce the negative impact of landlockedness and external shocks and as a means to job creation, poverty eradication, resilience building and sustainable development. Furthermore, higher-value and low-bulk exports are particularly crucial for landlocked developing countries. It is for this reason that we emphasize the development of manufacturing, agriculture and the services sector, including finance, information and communication technologies and sustainable tourism;

24. *We note* the importance of landlocked developing countries integrating into regional and global value chains to expand their export markets and diversify their export baskets. However, many landlocked developing countries need guidance on what activities they should pursue and how they can join. In this regard, we call upon development partners and international organizations to help the landlocked developing countries to strengthen their capacity to participate in regional and global value chains and identifying the best opportunities for developing new products and export markets, given their comparative advantages;

25. *We express* our serious concern about the frequent falls in commodity prices, which have affected our efforts towards sustainable development. We call upon the international community to enhance efforts to support landlocked developing countries in diversifying their exports, through, inter alia, the transfer of relevant technologies, support to develop and strengthen their productive capacities, value addition and capacity-building in developing relevant policies;

26. *We recognize* the growing role of the services sector in modern economies, in particular, the importance of the tourism sector, finance and information and communications technology, and that an efficient and productive services industry will contribute significantly to productivity growth and the overall competitiveness of the economies of landlocked developing countries. In that regard, we affirm our commitment to develop the service sector and call upon international organizations to support landlocked developing countries in developing their services sectors;

27. *We recognize* in particular that e-commerce presents an unparalleled opportunity for landlocked developing countries to explore, as this form of trade is less susceptible to the constraints of being landlocked. We call upon the international organizations and development partners to support landlocked developing countries in successfully developing e-commerce;

28. *We note* with concern that the landlocked developing countries are highly exposed to climate change and disproportionately affected by its adverse impacts owing to their location, low income, low institutional capacity and greater reliance on climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture. This is exacerbated by

desertification, land degradation, drought, floods, cyclones and other natural and man-made disasters: landlocked developing countries must be provided with adequate levels of resources in order to enhance their resilience to climate change;

29. *We welcome* the Paris Agreement as a means to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, which is one of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda. We look forward to its prompt entry into force and ambitious action by all, as well as the mobilization of resources to assist its implementation;

30. *We request* the strengthening of a regional integration framework: transit countries should guarantee free and unrestricted transit through their territories for landlocked developing countries to allow the enjoyment of a free and direct access to the high seas. Close cooperation with transit countries is the only way for landlocked developing countries to face obstacles and to enhance regional integration processes, including improved transit transport connectivity, border agency cooperation and harmonized customs procedures and common regulatory policies;

31. *We also stress* the need to promote meaningful regional integration in a broader range of areas, including investment, research and development and policies aimed at accelerating regional industrial development and regional connectivity, including in energy and ICT. These processes will help towards ensuring greater intraregional trade, the deepening of regional markets and the fostering of structural change and economic growth in landlocked developing countries. We call upon our partners to support these initiatives;

32. *We request* the strengthening of the role of economic corridors, corridor management organizations, subregional arrangements and regional groupings in achieving deepened regional integration, and note with interest the recent formal establishment of an economic corridor linking Mongolia, China and the Russian Federation. We stress the importance of focusing on a transport corridor framework as the first stage of cost reductions, which involves the upgrading of road, rail and port and inland waterway infrastructure to support trade along the routes and reduce congestion at entry points, hence promoting the smooth movement of goods and services. We also recognize the significance of international transport corridors for regional sustainable development;

33. *We recognize* the efforts of the landlocked developing countries to enhance domestic resource generation, including broadening of the tax base and enhancing revenue administration through modernized, progressive tax systems, improved tax policy and more efficient tax collection and administration, and call upon the international community to support our national efforts. We are committed to reducing corruption and increasing transparency at all levels;

34. *We call upon* development partners to increase the amount of official development assistance (ODA) to landlocked developing countries, in a sustainable manner, to help us to overcome the obstacles imposed by geography and to integrate into the multilateral trading system. ODA remains the main source of international financing for many landlocked developing countries and is essential as a catalyst for development, facilitating the achievement of national development objectives, including achieving Sustainable Development Goals and implementing the Vienna Programme of Action in a coherent manner;

35. *We appreciate* that, at its high-level meeting in December 2014, the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development adopted a communiqué in which its members committed to dedicating more of total ODA to countries most in need, specifically mentioning landlocked developing countries as one of the groups to be further supported. We encourage the Committee to move forward in fulfilling this commitment;

36. *We reiterate* our request that development assistance provided in the context of the Aid for Trade initiative should consider the special needs and requirements of landlocked developing countries to build their trade and supply-side capacities and should also be enhanced;

37. *We emphasize* the complementary and catalytic role played by long-term international capital flows, particularly foreign direct investment. We commit to continue promoting policies conducive to attracting foreign direct investment that leads to the promotion of trade as well as the sustainable development of landlocked developing countries. We call upon development partners to provide greater financial assistance and support to the foreign direct investment (FDI)-seeking efforts of landlocked developing countries by adopting and implementing economic, financial and legal incentives to encourage FDI flows to landlocked developing countries;

38. *We urge* international and regional organizations and development partners to provide financial and technical assistance to support the transfer of reliable and affordable technologies and to promote capacity-building, taking into account our national priorities;

39. *We recognize* the importance of the participation of the private sector, including large, medium- and small-sized enterprises, in the development process of our countries, in promoting economic growth and poverty reduction through the creation of decent jobs, the promotion of innovation, economic diversification and competition, in accordance with national policies. We commit to developing deliberate policies to support the strengthening of the private sector, in particular, improving access to financial resources, developing appropriate human capacity and promoting investment in a supportive economic infrastructure. We call upon development partners to provide enhanced financial and technical support to the private sector, especially in the area of the development of small and medium-sized enterprises;

40. *We reaffirm* the importance of strengthening South-South and triangular cooperation to support the development efforts of landlocked developing countries and enhance their participation in the global economy. We commend efforts made through South-South cooperation in the areas of transit transport cooperation between landlocked and transit developing countries and request that these efforts be scaled up to help landlocked developing countries address the complex and severe development challenges that they face because of their geographical disadvantages. We also reiterate the Group position that South-South and triangular cooperation is a complement to, rather than a substitute for, North-South cooperation;

41. *We call* for relevant United Nations agencies and relevant international and regional organizations to continue to mainstream the Vienna Programme of

Action into their programme of work, to support the implementation of the Programme of Action within their existing mandates;

42. *We stress* that, in accordance with the mandate given by the General Assembly, the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States should continue to ensure coordinated follow-up to and effective monitoring of and reporting on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, and to undertake advocacy efforts at the national, regional and global levels. We also stress that the Office, in collaboration with other relevant stakeholders, should continue to work on developing relevant indicators for measuring the progress on implementing the Programme of Action in landlocked developing countries, within their existing mandates;

43. *We invite* partner countries and the international financial and development institutions to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund established by the Secretary-General to support the activities related to the follow-up to the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action;

44. *We call upon and encourage* all landlocked developing countries that have not yet done so to ratify the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, in order to bring it into full operation for the benefit of all landlocked developing countries, which will contribute to strengthening our capacity to undertake research and analysis and to negotiating for and benefiting from bilateral and multilateral trade and transit agreements;

45. *We welcome* the project entitled "The research on economic diversification of landlocked developing countries: cases of Mongolia, Bhutan, Nepal and Paraguay" which will be implemented by the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries from 1 January 2017 and which will provide important evidence-based policy recommendations to assist the landlocked developing countries on how to build their productive capacities, diversify their economies and undergo structural transformation;

46. *We welcome* the high-level seminar on the theme "Accelerating sustainable energy for all in landlocked developing countries through innovative partnerships", to be held in Vienna on 24 and 25 October 2016, and further reaffirm the importance of universal access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy services for all;

47. *We welcome* the High-level Meeting on Sustainable Transport of Landlocked Developing Countries, to be held in Santa Cruz, Plurinational State of Bolivia, on 13 and 14 October 2016 and the first Global Conference on Sustainable Transport, to be held in Ashgabat on 26 and 27 November 2016. The outcomes of these meetings will feed into the process of defining new strategies, cooperation initiatives and policy recommendations on trade and transport issues in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

48. *We reaffirm* our strong commitment to the full implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, which is an integral part of the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, we call for a revitalized, renewed and strengthened global partnership

between landlocked developing countries and the transit countries, their development partners and other stakeholders;

49. *We welcome* the establishment of the Group of Friends of landlocked developing countries and appreciate the efforts undertaken by the Group of Friends in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, and encourage their continued engagement to assist in the process of addressing the special challenges and needs of the landlocked developing countries;

50. *We appreciate* the important role played by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States in the coordination and follow-up of development programmes of landlocked developing countries;

51. *We recognize* the role that Paraguay has undertaken in the coordination of trade and development issues of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries in Geneva;

52. *We express* our sincere recognition to the Government of the Republic of Zambia, in its capacity as the Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, for the efforts undertaken in coordinating the Group's activities, including the revision of the rules of procedure of the Group of the landlocked developing countries in order to enhance the work of the Group.